

Agricultural Technologies Help Protect Natural Habitats

Advances in Plant Science Recognized on International Day for Biological Diversity

22 May 2012, Brussels — Today, in honour of International Day for Biological Diversity, CropLife International celebrates the variety of wild life and their natural habitats, and the role modern agriculture plays in helping preserve it. Advances in agricultural technologies, such as innovative crop protection products and biotech seeds, allow farmers to make the most of existing cropland to prevent expansion into natural habitats.

“This day reminds us of the important role agriculture plays in protecting wildlife and the environment,” says Howard Minigh, president and CEO of CropLife International. “Fortunately, today’s agricultural technologies allow us to do so while increasing food production to meet global demand.”

By increasing crop production, these technologies decrease the need to expand farmland. In fact, massive gains in agricultural productivity in the past 50 years have saved a landmass the size of North America from conversion into farmland. About 30-60 per cent of these increases are credited to improved crop varieties through plant breeding. From 1996 to 2009 alone, biotech crops worldwide prevented 75 million hectares of land from being used for farming.

Moreover, herbicide-tolerant biotech crops enable farmers to use environmentally sound herbicides instead of tillage for weed control. This leaves crop stubble in the field, which improves habitat and food sources for insects, birds and other animals. In fact, mammals and birds thrive in the protective residue of no-till fields.

“Agricultural systems today allow for good stewardship of the land, including both conservation (no-till) practices and the precise and responsible application of crop protection products,” notes Minigh. “These products complement plant biotechnology to help farmers worldwide maximize crop production and protect biodiversity.”

In addition, plant science technologies, such as herbicides, can help manage the spread of invasive alien species, which threaten biodiversity and natural habitats by outcompeting native plants.

To learn more about how the plant science industry is helping sustain and promote biodiversity, go to <http://actionforag.org/issue/land-use-bio>.

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CropLife International is the global federation representing the plant science industry. It supports a network of regional and national associations in 91 countries, and is led by companies such as BASF, Bayer CropScience, Dow AgroSciences, DuPont, FMC, Monsanto, Sumitomo and Syngenta. CropLife International promotes the benefits of crop protection and biotechnology products, their importance to sustainable agriculture and food production, and their responsible use through stewardship activities.